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Background Information

(See summary on last page)

Indonesia's Chances for Resisting Communism

Russia's Drive to the East

Indonesia for the present is probably the best situated of all Southeast Asian countries, except the Philippines, to withstand Soviet Russia's Far East push. But the geographical factors which put Indonesia's 76 million people in less immediate peril than those of Indo-China, Burma, Siam and Malaya, may provide only a temporary breathing spell.

If communist forces gain control of large and secure bases on the Southeast Asian mainland, then Moscow can lend full support to its advance agents in the easily accessible islands of Indonesia. Furthermore, it is clear that if Moscow's plans succeed, Indonesia will soon actually face such an increase in communist pressure.

Joseph Alsop writing in the Feb. 16, 1949, Herald Tribune says, "what is going forward in the Far East is nothing less than a Soviet land drive toward Australia in many ways comparable to the Japanese drive by sea."

Pointing out the strategic value of Indonesia in this Soviet land drive, William Philip Simms says in the Jan. 3, 1948, World Telegram, "In the hands of ... Russia, control of Indonesia virtually would isolate Australia and New Zealand ... and the Philippines as well as Japan would be in great jeopardy ... Control of Indonesia would help Russia keep India neutral."

Speaking of the strategic value of Southeast Asia as a whole, Alsop says, "Burma and Indo-China are necessary rice bowls of the Orient. Malayan rubber and tin are among the foundation stones of the British economy. If Japan is denied commerce with Asia she can only survive precariously, if at all, on huge American subsidies. And if the rest of Asia falls into the Soviet grip the subcontinent of India will also be in immediate peril."

Commenting on the outlook for Southeast Asia as a whole, George Fielding Eliot in the N.Y. Post of Dec. 4, says, it "is an area where Western influence can be stronger than that of the Soviet Union because of existing political arrangements and control of sea and air communications, while the seat of Soviet power is far away."

But in February Mr. Alsop reported, "London has now urgently warned Paris ... that the jig will be up (in Indo-China) if and when Chinese Communists control the other side of the border from Ho Chi Minh's forces." The same might have been said of Burma, where Communist guerillas are strongly entrenched.

If London's warning, as reported by Mr. Alsop, was justified, then the jig may already be up in Indo-China. "Chinese Communists have seized control of half of Yunnan province, the vast Southwest China area bordering Indo-China and Burma,



and have taken the initiative in the Indo-Chinese rebellion against the French." So reads a March 24 U.P.-dispatch from London. Six days later an A.P.-report from Hanoi, Indo-China, appeared in the New York Times headed, "Chinese Communists Attack in Indo-China; Part of Moncay, a Border Town, Is Seized."

And from Burma on March 31 came an A.P. dispatch saying, "Three rebel groups have combined forces to set up an administration over 300 square miles of territory in midwestern Burma ... The groups are the White Band People's Volunteers Organization (PVO's), Communists and mutineering Burma rifle units."

So far Communist armed forces on the Southeast Asian mainland have met few reverses except in Malaya, but even there they remain strong, damaging the economy and maintaining direct links with Indonesian Communists. If the Burmese Government and the French in Indo-China receive substantial military aid from abroad, they may still be able to turn or stop the steadily advancing Red tide. Otherwise, it seems more than possible that in the near future Burma and Indo-China may suffer China's fate.

Should Burma and Indo-China thus go Communist by default, Siam would be completely outflanked and, unless garrisoned by a modern army, would probably fall behind the iron curtain. But whether Siam could hold out or not, the conquest of Burma and Indo-China would mean an increase of Communist pressure to the South. Having secured these advance bases, the Communists would be in a position to focus more attention and personnel on nearby Malaya. Their cohorts in this rich peninsula area (where half the population is Chinese) would then receive greater support in the form of money and arms, as well as skilled agents and guerillas from China, Burma and Indo-China.

This series of events seems likely to take place unless, or until, superior armed force intervenes to eliminate or seal off centers of Communist military activity.

To date the non-Communist powers have not announced any effective measures for aiding the faltering forces in Burma and Indo-China. Obviously the protection of these two countries offers the only sure safeguard for Siam and Malaya, and in turn the best safeguard for Indonesia is the protection of Malaya. But because it is not certain that Indonesia will have such protection there is real danger that its 3000 islands may soon be the object of stepped-up Communist activities, aided and directed from mainland bases to the north.

Now, since the Communists have won a decisive victory in China, the danger for Southeast Asia has become more immediate. There are good reasons to be skeptical about the appearance of Chinese "Tito-ism". Nathan Leites and David Nelson Rowe, Yale experts on Far Eastern affairs, have recently stated (see "Choices in China" in "World Politics", Vol. 1 #3, April 1949, page 280) that "the Chinese Communists followed without hesitation or qualification the jerky and profound changes of line, decreed by the Soviet Union...", and therefore, were convinced of "the complete subordination of Communist China to Moscow..."

Just how important the influence of the Communist victory in China will be seems to be well expressed by Foster Hailey in his article in the New York Times, Sunday, May 15, 1949, page 4E, in which he states: "Even those Asiatics who fear Chinese domination and who are more inclined by their heads to the West and democracy than to the East and Communism must take pride secretly in the elimination of the long-held major influence of the white man in China. They would not welcome attempted domination by Moscow either, but if Chinese Communists are able quickly to organize a strong Government, the balance would be finely drawn as to whether all Asia would go Communist. What seems uncontradictable is that the main theatre of operations of the cold war has shifted from Europe to the Far East. The stake is one-half of the peoples of the world."

Indonesia's Strength

If Indonesia did not lie athwart the path of Russia's Far Eastern drive, there would be less need to examine its powers to resist Communism. Indonesia's danger is in the first place external and if its Communist movement were cut off from outside aid and left to its own devices, Moscow's chance of controlling this strategic archipelago would greatly decrease.

Since the war Indonesia's Partai Kommunis Indonesia (PKI) has failed to attract a staunch, disciplined mass following and, unlike its counterparts in Burma and Indo-China, has failed to bring any territory under its separate authority or to organize a strong, regular military force. PKI's comparative lack of success can be traced in part to Moscow's preoccupation with more immediate objectives, but equally important is the fact that in Indonesia communism has found fewer opportunities for infiltration than in countries to the north.

In Indonesia, as in all the Far East, strongly held religious faiths are a bar to the acceptance of Communist ideas. Of the Archipelago's 76 million people, 65 millions are Moslems, 3 millions are Christians, 1,5 millions are Hindus and 2 millions are Buddhists. However, the lesson of China and Indo-China has been that religious conviction by itself is not a strong enough force to stem the spread of Communist control.

Prior to communism's victories in China, it might have been assumed that Indonesia's agricultural economy would impede the spread of Marxist ideas. After all, the Communist aim of a dictatorship of the industrial proletariat can have little appeal in Indonesia, where out of a total working population of about 26,300,000 only 10 per cent are engaged in industry and handicrafts. But experience in China, and even in Russia itself, shows that under certain conditions communism can win support from the peasantry.

Fortunately for Indonesia, its agricultural population is in crucial respects better off than that of China, India, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China or the Philippines. In these other countries the peasantry as a class has had special grievances which the Communists could and have promised to correct. In most of the Far East except Indonesia, the farmer has been alienated from his land, usually through foreclosure by money lenders. By this process the landed peasant was transformed into a tenant farmer and loaded with ever-mounting debts, thus becoming a helpless victim of the status quo who might suppose he had nothing to lose and everything to gain by espousing communism.

Indonesia has also had its money lenders, mostly Chinese, but their only power over debtors was the power to withhold further credit. By the 1855 decree, later confirmed by the Agrarian Law of 1870, it became illegal for non-Indonesians to buy land, hence it could not be pledged as security against loans from the Chinese. Thus, even if an Indonesian peasant defaulted on a loan, he still retained his fields, with the result that today almost all of the land is in small private or larger communal holdings.

Despite the Agrarian law, however, the Indonesian farmer could and did get into debt, but without the disastrous consequences observed in other Far Eastern countries. Until 1904, when the Peoples Credit Banks and Village Credit Banks were set up, the farmer might be trapped by usurious interest rates and thus lose his livestock, but he kept his land and could start over again. Even after the date when cheaper credit was available, the farmer still often preferred the less bothersome practice of borrowing from the money lender, but the price he paid was at worst a bad credit standing, a price not sufficiently high to turn him against the existing social system.

Thanks to all these factors, Indonesia's Communists since the war have been one of the weaker links in Moscow's chain of Far Eastern fifth columns. Geographical remoteness, religious antipathy and a strong peasant class have all combined to frustrate PKI's aims, and today give Indonesia a chance to prepare for future communist onslaughts. Even though the country's communist movement is still intact and possesses arms, its lack of secure basis has confined it to sporadic guerilla activities which can be eliminated by forces at Indonesia's disposal.

Indonesia's Weakness

Originally Marxism won support from many Indonesian intellectuals chiefly because its critique of colonialism mirrored their own nationalist aspirations. As Indonesia achieves independence this appeal disappears, but it is replaced by the new appeal of Soviet prestige as an expanding power in the Far East. Under the most favorable conditions in Indonesia it is inevitable that some intellectuals and youth will regard communism as the coming way of life in their part of the world, and for this reason, rather than on the basis of principle, they will support its aims.

Apparently on orders from Moscow, the Indonesian Communists in September 1948 launched a futile revolt, and if in the immediate future they continue these tactics they will bring about their own extermination. It seems more likely, therefore, that they will return to the methods of infiltrating various organizations and fomenting unrest. Their hope would be that outside aid plus lack of stability in Indonesia would soon give them a chance to take control of some area from which they could spread their doctrine with the force of arms.

Indonesia's best prospects of staving off communist infiltration lie in the rapid achievement of stable self-rule. At the same time the communists welcome Indonesia's independence because it offers them a chance to prevent the return of peaceful conditions and to create a "revolutionary situation" in which they might seize power.



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Favorable to Moscow's aims is the fact that organizing a stable Indonesian government based on a stable economy is an intrinsically difficult task, even without communist opposition. Thus Indonesia's future depends upon the race between growing communist power in Southeast Asia and the formation of a strong, independent United States of Indonesia.

Independence is scheduled for later this year, but economic reconstruction and the consolidation of stable government can only take place over a longer period of time. Moreover, the achievement of reconstruction and stable rule must go hand-in-hand. Domestic consumption in Indonesia is today estimated at 30 per cent below prewar levels, which were not much above subsistence. And unless living standards are at least restored to prewar, no democratic government can long maintain itself in Indonesia.

But even before achieving full reconstruction there must be reliable government authority if Indonesia is to attract and utilize the foreign capital needed for recovery. According to the latest calculations Indonesia during the next years needs a minimum of \$750 million in foreign capital to rebuild her domestic economy and revive exports. And if Indonesia cannot attract this amount she will face a truly explosive economic situation which will play into the Communists' hands.

It is chiefly the heavy pressure of population on the food supply that clouds the prospects of stable economy in Indonesia. Of its 76 million people, 48 million live on Java, with an area no greater than that of New York State. On Java alone the population increases 600,000 annually, while the rest of the Archipelago contributes an additional 400,000 yearly.

This rapidly growing population was able to raise its own food in the years immediately before the war, but today the production of rice, Indonesia's staple food, is still below prewar amounts, a fact of double significance in view of the population increase of six million since 1940. Especially on crowded Java it will be difficult for the people to feed and support themselves. Even with foreign capital, they can only slightly increase food production over prewar, and then they will have to seek additional means of livelihood through industrialization, a process requiring further investments of foreign capital.

Should lack of stable authority discourage foreign investment in Indonesia, then the outlook for solving that country's economic problems would be exceedingly dim. In that event intensified popular discontent plus political instability would give Communism greater opportunities for infiltration which could lead to Moscow's domination of Indonesia.

This is the pessimistic view, a view taken throughout the sections on "Indonesia's Weakness" and "Russia's Drive to the East." The dark side of the picture is intentionally stressed to show the very real dangers that Indonesia faces. The bright side of the picture is that these dangers can be avoided if Indonesia has a stable government buttressed by economic cooperation with the West.

The role of Communism in Indonesia.

A careful observer will notice the remarkable fact that, when the subject of Communism is discussed in relation to Indonesia, it is always connected with movements inside the Indonesian Republic, and not with developments inside the Federal States.

From the point of view of anti-colonialism, the Federalists do not differ from the Republicans; both reject the prewar colonial relationship between The Netherlands and Indonesia; both want the Indonesians to have sovereignty over their homeland. But within each of their areas the internal problems differ.

The Republican leaders were constantly faced with the difficulty of creating unity of opinion within their own rank and file. Every political group possessed its own fighting organization which was constantly used to influence the balance of power within the Republican Government.

In the Federalist States, those fighting units did not exist. This opened the way to a democratic form of government, whereby existing traditional institutions were utilized, though modernized whenever circumstances so required.

Postwar political developments in the Republic started with a complete rejection of the customary institutions, an "Umwertung aller Werte", which resulted in social instability and personal insecurity. The utter political chaos which followed necessitated the Republican leaders to stress the "nationalist revolution" and "nationalism", the only values agreed upon by all, thereby sacrificing the other social and cultural values.

It can be argued that the differences in internal developments in the Federal and Republican areas were partly due to the accidental fact that the Japanese occupying Army on Java and Sumatra left the nationalists their arms, while in the "Outer Provinces" (islands other than Java and Sumatra) which were occupied by the Japanese Navy, this navy could not very well leave the natives their battleships, etc.

But this fact only emphasized the already existing difference in development between Java and Sumatra on the one side, and the Outer Provinces on the other. The Dutch, since their return to the Archipelago in 1830, had concentrated colonial development on Java and Sumatra, thereby until the turn of the century neglecting the Outer Provinces. Social modernization was, therefore, much more advanced on Java and Sumatra than in the Outer Provinces. Since 1910, however, indigenous institutions have been used in the Outer Provinces as part of the colonial administration.

The stress on "nationalism" and "independence" which the Indonesian nationalist Republicans put in their struggle against the Dutch, was cleverly exploited by the Communists who immediately included the utilization of the bandwagon of nationalism in their tactics. Its appeal, especially to the younger generation is, therefore, understandable.

The principle exponent of nationalism in Communist circles was Alimin, a well-known Communist revolutionary, who once was the Indonesian representative at the University of Lenin, together with Chou En Lai (China), Harry Pollitt (England), L. Sharkey (Australia), Okano (Japan), Earl Browder (USA), Thälmann (Germany), Thorez (France), etc. His speeches, made in several cities on Java, were very well acclaimed by Indonesian nationalists who called him "Bapa Rakjat" (Father of the People).

He is the exponent also of the "legal line" in Communist activities in Indonesia. The "legal line", as everywhere in the world, meant a process of gradual Communist infiltration of all government institutions, and of private organizations like the trade unions, the schools, the press, etc. A special "Marx House" was opened in Madiun to educate "cadres" who in turn, set up local discussion-groups.

Nationalism was also the backbone of the "Sajap Kiri"—the Left Alliance—which included the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI—Indonesian Communist Party), the Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia (Pesindo—Indonesian Socialist Youth Movement), the Partai Buruh Indonesia (PBI—Indonesian Workers Party), the Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (Sobsi—All Indonesian Workers Organization), the Partai Sosialis (Socialist Party), and the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI—Indonesian Socialist Party).

Nationalism was also instrumental in the formation of the Front Demokrasi Rakjat (FDR—Democratic Peoples Front), the successor of the Sajap Kiri, when Sutan Sjahrir split with Amir Sjarifuddin after Sjarifuddin decided to oppose Mohammed Hatta. Personal reasons, thereby, played a greater role than Hatta's support of the Linggadjati and Renville Agreements with the Dutch.

The Front Demokrasi Rakjat was a tightly controlled organization, headed by a "Polit Buro" which was divided into several secretariats in conformity with its counterpart in the USSR.

General Affairs	- Muso, Maruto Darusman, Tan Ling Djie, Ngadiman
Labor Affairs	- Harjono Hardjokusumo, Setyadjit, Djokosujono, Abdulmadjid, Ahmad Suwadi
Agricultural Affairs	- A. Tjokronegoro, D.N. Aidid, Sutrisno
Youth Affairs	- Suripno, Wikana
Foreign Affairs	- Suripno
Defense	- Amir Sjarifuddin
Agitation and Propaganda	- Alimin, Lukman, Sardjono
Organization	- Sudiman
Representation	- Njoto
Finance	- Ruskak

The matters related to "cadres" are supervised by the General Affairs secretariat.

Amir Sjarifuddin is the perfect example of the opportunists among the Republican leaders. When he saw the star of Communism rising, he declared himself a convinced Communist of long standing. He managed very well in increasing Communist influence within the ranks of the Republican Army and the armed youth movements. Also after his split with Sjahrir, his prestige remained high.

In the Army, Sjarifuddin exercised his influence through the Pepolit (Pendidikan Politik Tentara - Political education for the troops) which he introduced when he was holding the post of Minister of Defense. A number of mass-meetings of Army personnel during which slogans were carried appealing for "the return of our Amir" were evidence of his influence. In the armed youth movements Sjarifuddin worked through the "Buro Perdjjuangan" (Struggle Office), later renamed "Tentara Bagian Masjarakat" (Civil Department of the Army). His influence there was shown by the fact that, after his resignation, he could still use a train for a personal propaganda-tour during which he even agitated against the Hatta-Government.

The "illegal line" of action was headed by Muso who, together with Suripno carried the plan back from Prague for the Madiun Revolt in September, 1948. Muso is a Communist of long standing. Speaking Chinese fluently, he was the right man to maintain a regular contact between the Communist movements in Indonesia, China, Indo-China, and Malaya. As a man of many aliases and as a Moscow-trained revolutionary, he was indeed the best man available in Indonesia for conducting the illegal activities. In order to facilitate his operations, he was declared "dead" many times.

Suripno acted as "envoy and minister plenipotentiary" of the Indonesian Republic, and carried a special letter of accreditation with him, signed by President Sukarno. It is necessary to state at this point that the Republican leaders were intentionally sending representatives to Europe in an official capacity or as students - to obtain Russian support. For the attainment of their main purpose: "independence from colonial rule" they were willing to accept any support, even from the USSR.

The Republic, for instance, has an official representative in London, Dr. Subandrio. It is also represented by Sunito, chairman of the Communist influenced Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Association) in The Netherlands, who was charged with East-European Affairs. After the collapse of the Madiun Revolt, Sunito proposed his resignation to Dr. Subandrio which, however, was not accepted, since Sunito was apparently still useful to the Republic in this post. He travels regularly throughout Europe, and also attended the Conference for World Peace at Paris, in April, 1949.

Within the Republic, illegal activities of the Communists consist of:

- a) infiltration into the Federal territories,
- b) kidnapping of Federal officials,
- c) planned execution of the scorched earth policy,
- d) systematic intimidation of the native population.

Two groups are involved in illegal activities:

- 1) the revived Front Demokrasi Rakjat which reputedly collapsed after the Madiun Revolt, but is now active again in Central Java, near Surakarta and Jogjakarta, headed by the surviving members of the Polit Buro.
- 2) Tan Malaka's group, the Partai Murba (proletarian Party), now cooperating with extreme nationalist leaders like Sutomo. Recent reports state that a number of Hatta's Cabinet Ministers who were not taken prisoner during the second police action are also in the Surakarta area.

Ibrahim Gelar Datuk Sutan Malaka who is reputed to be a Trotzkyite because he was expelled from the Communist Party by the Comintern, can be compared with Muso in his many aliases and in his Moscow background as a Communist revolutionary. He now has the support of the best-equipped part of the Republican Army commanded by Colonel Sungkono. His group recently joined the revived Front Demokrasi Rakjat, and together, they are opposing the implementation of the Van Royen-Rum Agreement of May 7, 1949.

Tan Malaka was reported killed again a month ago, and apparently by his own supporter Colonel Sungkono. Definite proof of his death, however, is not available. Since, like Muso, he has been called "dead" many times, it is not unlikely that he is still alive also now. Also Sjarifuddin's death, which was reported by Republican officials in April, has not been confirmed. It is interesting to know that Sunito now still refuses to believe in Sjarifuddin's death.

Neither Sukarno nor Hatta are Communists, but they have continually been opportunistic in their attitude towards communism. Apparently, they lack the necessary political strength to completely defy the Communists. For example, Hatta's plans for the rationalization of industry failed, because the Communist-influenced labor unions refused to comply with his orders.

Sukarno never condemned communism as such, even after the Madiun Revolt, but only ordered the participants to be arrested. The result was that both Tan Malaka and Rustam Effendi were never arrested. Further instances of Sukarno's flirtations with communism are:

- 1) In November, 1945, Sukarno sent a telegram to Stalin, expressing his admiration for the Russian system, and his confidence in the ultimate victory of the Soviet ideals. A year later, on November 6, 1946, he declared in a speech at Madiun - where he knew the Communists had a very strong following - that the youth movements had to put into practice the theories of Karl Marx.
- 2) At a student conference in Malang on April 24, 1947, he emphasized the connection between Indonesia's struggle for freedom and the personality of Marshal Stalin, "the great general of the revolution".
- 3) In June, 1947, he instructed Alimin to travel to Moscow in an attempt to secure economic and financial support from the USSR.
- 4) A year later, he allowed the Indonesian Communist Party to establish special contacts in Malaya.

The hypothesis that the restoration of the Republic will stop guerilla activity on Java and Sumatra, therefore, is not justified. Probably, the formation of a disciplined Federal Army under the supervision of the Provisional Federal Government will have more immediate results.

In this connection, it is interesting to notice that in September, 1949, the four year period for which Sukarno and Hatta were "elected", will end. Whoever will be the president then must still face the troubles that Communist activity has brought upon Java and Sumatra.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNISM IN INDONESIA

The Republic of Indonesia is not Communist-inspired. Nevertheless, certain movements within the Republic have greatly strengthened Communist influence in Java and Sumatra. This situation is especially apparent among the younger revolutionaries who believe they are fighting for nationalism while, in reality, they are supporting clever Communist elements.

Strategically, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and a number of island groups in the Pacific comprise the Western world's second line of defense against advancing Communism in Asia. The first line of defense is China, Korea, Indo-China, Malaya, Siam, Burma and India. China is already lost. Other countries within both the first and second defense lines are faced with the Communist problem to a greater or lesser degree.

The surest way to stem further Communist advances in Asia is through the establishment of stable governments in all Asiatic countries. These governments must be buttressed by economic cooperation from the West, for they do not have the technological know-how and financial resources necessary to raise the living standard of their needy population. It is enlightening to note that Communism has made no headway in the Federalist areas of Indonesia. But it has advanced appreciably within the Indonesian Republic.

Politically, neither Republican President Sukarno nor Vice-President Hatta are Communists. Nevertheless, their dealings with Indonesian Communists show an unfortunate opportunism which belies their present reputation as "fighters of Communism". Furthermore, these opportunistic tendencies do not guarantee that they will make a sincere attempt to eliminate Communist influence if, in the future, it gains strength under Republican de facto sovereignty.

The Sukarno Regime only removed Communists who were acting directly against their authority. Therefore, the restoration of the Republic to Jogjakarta does not insure the return of law and order to Java and Sumatra--especially since the best-equipped Republican troops under Colonel Sungkono are cooperating with the recently-joined Front Demokrasi Rakjat (FDR) and the Partai Murba--Communist armed groups.

No real proof of the death of Indonesia's most prominent Communist leaders--Muso, Alimin, Tan Malaka and Sjarifuddin--is another indication that the Communist danger in Java and Sumatra is still a living reality. It is also a fact that the FDR Politburo is still functioning.

It is possible that a Federal Army, controlled by the Provisional Federal Government in cooperation with the restored Republic, could expedite a return to law and order in Java and Sumatra. Guerilla forces, legally classified as ordinary rebels, would be subject to execution. (The Provisional Federal Government on March 30 of this year approved plans for an Indonesian Federal Army. Recruiting of troops has already begun.) The question remains, however, whether this new Indonesian Army will fight their Indonesian "brothers."

Economically, the loss of Indonesia to Communism would mean the loss of 90% of the world's quinine production, 70% of the global kapok harvest, 25% of all palm oil production. Other strategic raw materials lost to Communism would be: rubber, tin, crude oil, bauxite and thorium. Chemists throughout the world are able to replace some of these products, but only at high-cost.

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